

SPiRiT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

THE RAILROADS AND THE PEOPLE.

When railroads first began to be built in this country, it was upon the theory that they were only a new variety of turnpikes. The laws authorizing their builders to take the land they required without the consent of its owners were sustained purely on grounds of public policy. It was said by the courts that the iron track was as much a public convenience as one of earth or stone, and that, just as any citizen could drive or walk over an ordinary road, so he could put his own car on a railroad and travel over it. This was, however, before the day of steam locomotives. As soon as these contrivances were introduced, the whole railroad system had to be modified. The railroad companies, from being mere road owners, became carriers of goods and passengers, and crowded their carriers off their tracks altogether. This was, indeed, inevitable. No business could be safely transacted on a railroad unless one single head regulated the movement of all the trains, and one man in his senses would now think of keeping a private locomotive and car for use on the various railroads of the country, as he keeps his carriages and horses. It is safer as well as cheaper for him to use the vehicles provided for the common use of all travellers.

This change in the theory of building and operating railroads, while it has yielded unexpected profits to their owners, has also given rise to a quite generally received opinion that they are nothing more than private money-making machines, like the business of a merchant or a manufacturer. During the last few years especially, our American railroad companies have gone on consolidating and extending their lines, and watering their capitals, with reference solely to their own interests. Their managers assume that their only duty is to make all the money they possibly can for themselves and their shareholders, and that the public are sheep to be shorn for their advantage.

There are indications at present of a rebellion against the tyranny of railroad corporations on the part of the people. Fortunately, legislative authority is still necessary for important acts on the part of the railroads, and these reminders to the popular representatives of the power they possess have not been useless. By a wise foresight the rate of way passenger fares on the Central Railroad of this State has been limited to three cents. In Illinois a law has lately been passed reducing the rates from five cents per mile to two and one-half cents, and limiting local freights to the lowest prices charged for through transportation. Similar laws will doubtless be enacted in all the other States, and speculators in railroad stocks who calculate on an unlimited increase of dividends will be disappointed. The people at large have too immediate an interest in keeping down the cost of passage and transportation for their representatives to dare to vote against that interest, and bribery will be impotent to defeat their will. Every farmer at the West sees plainly that it is he who pays the cost of carrying his wheat to market; since all wheat brings the same price at Chicago or New York, no matter how far it has had to be brought, and every cent paid for freight is a cent out of his pocket. Every maker and consumer of manufactured goods, or raiser of cattle or agricultural products, knows that the cheaper freights are the better it is for him; and the traveller, more than all, is alive to the difference between one dollar and two in the price of a railroad ticket. To suppose that any combination or monopoly can stand against this universal pressure, is to suppose that Niagara Falls can be dammed up by human agency, and the river rolled back into Lake Erie.

The time is coming when no railroad will be allowed to exact any greater compensation from its customers than enough to pay its expenses and the lowest market rate of interest on its cost. The watering of capitals, of which we have had so many stupendous instances, will not only be stopped, but undone where already accomplished, and railroads will be made to return to their original condition of instruments for the benefit of the public, and not for that of stockholders alone.

DR. DOLLINGER AND THE POPE.

The excommunication of Dr. Dollinger, which the cable announced the other day, may turn out to be the beginning of a great schism in the Roman Catholic Church. The veteran theologian of Munich has been the consistent opponent of the infallibility dogma from the very moment of its inception. He stands honorably distinguished among the great men who denounced the course of the majority at the late council, by persevering in his opposition after the dogma had been promulgated as an article of faith. He denied before the event, as he denies now, that the dogma has either a scriptural or an historical basis. He maintains that the passages of the New Testament on which Papal infallibility rests are otherwise interpreted by all the Fathers, and as his vow binds him to accept the patristic interpretation of Scripture, it compels him to reject that accepted by the Council of the Vatican. He denies the statement that Papal infallibility existed from the beginning of the Church, and characterizes it as being in glaring contradiction to undoubted facts. He alleges that two Ecumenical Councils of the fifteenth century decided against the pretension to Papal infallibility, and that, moreover, the late decrees are antagonistic to the constitutions of European States, and "specifically to the Bavarian Constitution, which he has sworn to observe." The solemn declaration of his reasons for refusing to submit to the new dogma was handed in to the Archbishop of Munich on March 23, and in addition to the points specified, contained the following statements. Thousands of both clergy and lay agree with him in holding the new articles of faith to be untenable. Even among those who have made a formal submission, nobody among his acquaintance believes the new doctrines save in some natural or evasive sense. The statement that the judgment-seat of God and of the Pope is one and the same originated among Latin populations, "and will never be able to make its way in German lands." The subjection of political order to Papal authority brought the old German Empire to destruction, and "were it to become dominant in Catholic Germany now, would at once implant the seeds of a deadly malady in the new Empire just established."

There are two notable things about Dr. Dollinger's position. The first is that he bases his opposition to the new dogma, and

its affiliated provisions, on grounds which lie strictly within the traditions and doctrines of the Roman Church. This will give his protest a significance and a power in that Church which it could not have otherwise possessed. The second is that, while rejecting the new article of faith "as a Christian, a theologian, and an historical student," he dissents from it also as a citizen, and as a citizen, moreover, of the newly-created German empire. This will do more than anything else to lend his arguments a vitality that will endure long after their author has passed away. Dr. Dollinger warns the bishops of the Church against the degradation of their office that is involved in making them merely the delegates of the Pope at Rome, who now arrogates "the entire plenitude of power" over every Catholic diocese in Christendom. So far, he indorses what has been known for centuries as the Gallican opposition to the usurpations of Rome. But when, in addition to this, he lays aside the ecclesiastical, and makes the duties of a patriot and a citizen vital arguments against the encroachments of a Jesuitical majority of his Church, he enunciates a doctrine that the Papacy must stamp out, or recognize as its own death-warrant. After its ancient manner, the Papacy has attempted to destroy this latest utterance of truth within the pale of the Church. Dr. Dollinger was allowed a fortnight by the ecclesiastical authorities at Munich to reconsider his decision regarding the dogma. His sentence of excommunication has, doubtless, been preceded by a deposition from his offices of Provost of the Royal Chapter, and Professor of Ecclesiastical History. The most erudite of the contemporary theologians of the Roman Catholic Church has thus, after fifty years of single-minded devotion to its service, been formally committed to everlasting perdition, because he refused to sacrifice either his intellect or his conscience at the bidding of some hundreds of Italian priests. A few triumphs like this would shatter the foundations of the Papacy more irrevocably than a new Reformation.

THE FEMALE SICKLES.

Our Californian advices on Saturday announced that the hideous comedy which has been for days past enacting in a San Francisco court of justice would probably reach its denouement on that day. The drop-scene, which, according to old-fashioned notions of this kind of performance, should end the bad eventful history, will of course be lacking. Our arena of adultery and assassination would cease to be amusing if its portals were formed with the ugly shadow of the gallows. We have as keen a passion as the ancient Romans had for the sports of the arena; but our sympathies are less for the victims, and we shudder at the shedding of blood by the unromantic hands of the public executioner. So certain have our audiences now become of the temper of our juries, that after the exquisite delights of the evidence and the stimulating collisions of the counsel are over nobody cares to wait for the dull formality of a verdict which can no longer be made even the basis of a bet. The spectators, like Messalina, "rather jaded than satiated," begin to drop out of the court-room before the nose of the judge has budged the preliminary note of his charge, just as we see unweary people slip on their great coats and bustle down the aisles of a theatre while the opulent uncle from India is in the very act of bestowing his blessing and fifty thousand pounds upon his long-lost niece. A few old stagers, grown rheumy and sentimental with years, may linger among the ladies to choke with emotion when the defendant's senior lawyer fondly clasps his rescued client to his manly breast ere he resigns her with a sob to the chaste embrace of the presiding judge.

But, as a telegram informs us is true of this case, the body of the public lose their interest in the trial as soon as the forensic fight is over. To-morrow's sun, it is fully expected in San Francisco, will see the "lovely and interesting" murderer of Mr. Crittenden set free once more to sweep with regal step the sounding corridors of hotels, and entrance with flashing eyes the quarter-decks of Mississippi steamers. Fortunately for the life insurance companies, the number of woman born with a predisposition to enjoy the promiscuous use of pistols and the refined excitements of life in the felon's dock is comparatively limited. We may reasonably hope that not a great many more middle-aged gentlemen of tangled social relations will be shot in the midst of their families as a result of Mrs. Fair's acquittal than would have come to such an end had that lady been hanged, as ladies of her tastes and temper used to be by our ancient English forefathers, or drowned, after the more decorous fashion of the still more ancient Jutes.

But since our reliance in this regard must clearly be upon the light of nature in the hearts of average women, rather than upon statutes and courts of justice, would it not, perhaps, be well to abrogate altogether these said useless statutes and to close those worse than useless courts of justice? Since it is agreed on all hands that the only practical effect of trials for murder in this country is to establish a gratuitous and overwhelming rivalry with the legitimate drama, do we not owe it to the regular professors of the histrionic art to relieve them of so unfair a competition? What possible chance would Mr. Forrest, or Mr. Booth, for example, have had of attracting an audience in Washington while the estimable Mr. Sickles was crowding the court-house? What living queen of tragedy could have paid her expenses in San Francisco during the height of Mrs. Fair's recent unparalleled success?

It is possible that some of our readers may denur to this view of the latest San Francisco sensation. There are, we believe, even in this enlightened age and country, persons so fossilized by tradition as to hold that murder is a criminal and reprehensible, not a lyrical and entrancing act. But surely such persons must put their hands upon their mouths and be dumb in the presence of the parallel which has just passed beneath our pen. No two poems, no two pictures, no two plays can be more alike than the deed which immortalized Mr. Sickles and that which is now about to immortalize Mrs. Fair. There are differences of detail, to be sure, in the acts, as of sex in the actors. But the grand resemblances swallow up the petty divergencies. In both cases the alleged impulse to the murder was the sudden recognition of a fact long perfectly familiar to the murderer. In both cases the unpremeditated deed was done with a weapon carefully prepared to that end. In both cases the circumstances of the assassination were admirably arranged to heighten with all the thrilling power of contrast its horror and its renown. The friend of Mr. Sickles fell by his hand in the public streets, within sight of his home and amid the sacred stillness of a Sabbath day. The lover of Mrs. Fair fell by her hand on a public ferry-boat, surrounded by his children and seated by his wife. The slayer of Mr. Key has been rewarded by the admiration of his countrymen, commissioned to defend her in war at home

and empowered to represent her in peace abroad. If a lower meed be now awarded to his fair competitor, it will be an overwhelming case for Miss Anthony and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, and all the other lovely protestants against the monopolizing meanness of mankind.

THE TRADE IN SOULS.

Again we are compelled to come before the public with a revolting story of the sordid crime that is eating the heart of the city. In the interest of public morals we have made a thorough investigation of some of the haunts of the monsters who devote their lives to the work of corruption. For the third time we call the attention of the chief of police to his sworn duty. We have suppressed the names and addresses of the foul lags who stand in these ante-rooms of perdition, to avoid giving improper information to the vicious or the thoughtless. But these are retained at this office at the disposition of Superintendent Kelso, if he can be presumed to be so ignorant of his field of labor as not to know them already.

We have been led to lay this frightful exhibit before the world on account of late incidents and letters received by the Tribune, which seem to indicate that this moral ulcer is growing and spreading with ominous rapidity. It is useless to mince the matter any further. The truth must be told at once, and in a way to bring the fact vividly before the conscience of the community. Under the guise of folly and fraud is concealed the most atrocious of vices. The pretended fortune-tellers who ply their vocation in this city are simply procurers; and all the more dangerous because the calling which they profess and publish makes them the medium of communication between depraved men seeking victims and ignorant young girls or vain women already corrupted. As fortune-tellers, they prey upon the ignorant and superstitious, and it is difficult to punish the taking of the money of the foolish under the false pretenses of giving information of the future. But as procurers they debauch the innocent and increase crime and pauperism; and as such they are amenable to the laws. If we cannot exterminate them, we can at least make their vile trade so infamous and so unsafe that their efforts to escape detection and punishment will deprive them of half their power to harm.

Of course we need not warn our readers to discriminate between the straightforward statements of our reporters and the slanderous utterances of the progressives. Whatever the representatives of the Tribune state in regard to their investigations is literally true, but it would be unsafe to conclude that the leathern columns which these she-fiends scatter broadcast upon the women of New York are anything more than the natural outpourings of their own vile hearts. They indulge in this violent exaggeration of the extent of their power and resources, partly to impose upon the licentious vanity of the men who hire them, and partly as an impotent protest against a fallen name against the virtue which shames and condemns it. But there is enough to startle and admonish us in the unquestionable fact of the existence of so many of these carrion-kites. They are at once the effect and the cause of a most deadly social disease, and it rests upon the authorities to go to the extreme limit of the law to make this infamy the most dangerous and most unprofitable of trades.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN SOCIETY.

The fragility of the basis on which this complex fabric of modern society rests is shown with startling clearness by the events in Paris. The story is made less intelligible than it might be by the exclamations of horror and disgust with which it is usually told, but in itself it is simple enough. For the purpose of defending Paris against the German besiegers it became necessary to arm even the humblest classes of the population and to turn them into National Guards, and during the whole period of the siege these classes obtained very nearly as large a share of whatever comforts and necessities were to be had as the richest part of the Parisian population. When the city capitulated it was intended to put an end to what was a system of practical communism—accompanied, it may be added, by that general security which would probably follow all attempts to try communistic experiments on a large scale; but the lower orders of National Guards refused to go back to the ordinary arrangements of society. The working men, as we should call them, declined to return to a life of arduous daily labor, of fluctuating wages, and of dependence on employers. They had arms in their hands, and announced that they should use them if the State withdrew the subsistence with which it had provided them for several months. The professional army was then ordered to force them back to their old position, but it would not act against them, and the whole city is therefore for the time at their mercy.

Here we have the very foundations of our social system laid absolutely bare. The ultimate conditions of the maintenance of the present order of things, multifold as it is, are the non-possession by the masses of artificial facilities for effectually using the force which naturally belongs to numbers and the fidelity of the professional guardians of society, whether called soldiery or police, to the Government which employs them. Both these conditions must fail in order that there may be an actual collapse of the social fabric; but, if they do fail, the crust which ordinarily feels so solid has been broken through, and the volcanic forces underneath it have their way. There are of course in many countries—in our own probably more than in any other—a great variety of influences which tend to keep the masses quiet and the public force loyal. But we have not as yet taken sufficient notice of the fact that in several communities which cannot be placed beyond the pale of civilization both the ultimate securities for the preservation of the social system to which we belong have for many years past given way over and over again. In Spain and in all the Spanish American States, the populace, which in fact has never been disarmed as has been the civil part of the rest of Europe for about two centuries, has many times broken out in revolt, and the professional army has joined it or has begun insurrections on its own account. On the whole, the most wonderful thing about these Spanish and Spanish American movements has been the little comparative injury which they have done to the States which have been their theatre. But the explanation appears to lie first in the comparatively low level of Spanish civilization, and next in the simplicity and sobriety of habits which unquestionably distinguish the Spanish race. A Spanish mob does not aim at much; and, even if it did, there is very little to be got. But now the malady has reached a society of a very different sort. During the last half-century France has created for itself a social system only second in point of com-

plexity and artificiality to the social system of this country, and no mind is equal to grasping the results of disturbing its very basis. Is there any community which is absolutely protected against the contagion? English "proletarians" who are eager to give votes to women are far enough, apparently, from a regimen of brute force; yet crowds who break down park railings are not absolutely without the sense of power, and we are at least taking the first step towards the creation of a professional army. These, however, are but small beginnings, and if it were not for that special weakness of the English social system which arises from our neglect to spread over a sufficiently large space the intense conservatism produced by the possession of land, it might be pronounced exceptionally secure. The solidity of the German social fabric, firmly as it appears to be at present welded together, may be much more seriously doubted. In Germany the populace and the army consist now of the same persons. The most elaborate contrivances are employed to diffuse the spirit of obedience and order through the body which has this double aspect, and the excitement of success places disloyalty for the present in the remote distance. Yet it is the universal experience of Americans that no class is so naturally impatient of authority as men of German birth. All that can be said is that if the force which supports the social edifice in Germany comes at any time to be dissatisfied with that edifice, great will be the fall of it.

The essential weakness of the foundations of modern society has long since attracted the attention of thoughtful men, and the remedies which have been proposed for it may be distributed into two classes. It would not be very unjust to associate one class with the name of Mr. Cobden, and the other with the name of Mr. Carlyle; not because these eminent men were the exclusive inventors or advocates of the remedies to which we refer, but because each name is the symbol of a school of thought to which a particular set of precautions against anarchy is congenial. The expedient in favor of the first school is to chain up all this "doggerly." The world is governed by force, they say; place therefore your force at the disposal of intelligence, and let it be organized into a system more or less beneficial but at all events effective. Independently of all other objections, it seems to us a conclusively answer to this theory that it is extremely doubtful whether, supposing intelligence to exist, there is force enough to place at its disposal, or force at all events on which it may rely. What was once practicable, when a small feudal aristocracy in exclusive possession of effective weapons for defense and offence had to put down a Jacquerie, has ceased to be practicable with modern armies. These armies are so large that they must include all or a great part of the populace; the canaille which is by the assumption to be put down fills the ranks, and is carefully instructed in the art of war. Nor is it practically possible to keep the professionally armed canaille from taking a certain interest in the mendicancies of the shams. The other theory is the exact reverse of the theory of the organization of force. Employ no force at all, say its preachers, or reduce it to a minimum. Trust to education and progress. Do your utmost to diffuse material comforts and intellectual pleasures, and the masses will need no coercion, because in the long run they will have all they can reasonably desire. The infirmity of such views appears to consist in attributing to the masses a set of aims which are not theirs and a standard of comfort which is not before their eyes. The theory assumes the permanence of certain interests of the masses, and the institution of private property—and expects the toiling multitude to be content with a somewhat larger share of it than it at present enjoys. Now it seems to us that moderate comfort is not the object desired by these classes, and that what they do desire they seek to obtain by means which are inconsistent with the maintenance of property as now understood. There could be no more improving exercise for a believer in peaceful progress as an exclusive substitute for organized force than attendance at the entertainment called a "penny gaff" or the perusal of a series of the Family Herald. The standard really before the eyes of the masses is one of extreme luxury, of that luxury which by a nature of the case can only be enjoyed by a small minority. No education, as it seems to us, short of the education furnished by bitter experience, can be expected to convince the majority in any length of time worth calculating that these views are untenable; and, indeed, one of the first results of education would be to introduce them to theories, doubtless un sound, which pretend to show that there are contrivances by which the laboring man can be enabled to share at once the luxury and the idleness of the class from which he is farthest removed. It may confidently be asserted that the problem of giving greater stability to society than it now possesses is much more difficult and complex than either of these schools of thought supposes or appears to suppose.

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